

Still Life with Jug and White Gums

Years 7 to 10 Visual Art

Activity Guide 6

This Activity Guide is directed at teachers and is suitable to be used with Years 7 to 10 students after they have visited the exhibition *White gums and ramoxes*. The exhibition is interesting as it shows Arthur Boyd using his father's ceramics as a direct inspiration for his own work. There are a variety of approaches to still life in each of the tasks described here. These can be adapted to a variety of media and techniques including photography.

Suggested Materials

Photography – digital camera, photo editing software

Charcoal – willow and compressed charcoal, gesso primed paper, fixative, kneadable eraser

Mixed media – watercolour pencils, small brushes, drawing ink and pens



Arthur Boyd, *Merric Boyd jug and head of his son Arthur Boyd*, 1980

Task One: Observation at the exhibition

Students examine the drawings and ceramics of Merric Boyd and compare these with references to them in Arthur's prints and paintings in the exhibition. Ask students to describe visual effects evident in his drawings. Students can find links between a drawing in the exhibition and describe the similarities and differences between the drawing and the ceramics work. Focus on texture, tone, line and rhythm.

Task Two: Homage to a Master: Photography

Students could research still life paintings from a particular time period, for example; Roman wall paintings, 17th Century Dutch still life, Post-Impressionists such as Cézanne and contemporary artists such as Hany Armanious or Ricky Swallow. Choose one artwork and re-create this work using found items from the home or school environment or second hand shops. Select items having a relationship to the items in the original artwork. Set up lighting similar to the lighting in the original in terms of intensity, direction and source. Pay close attention to the composition and balance of the still life arrangement, the use of colour, tone and form. Photograph the still life from different angles and with lighting variations. Select the best shots to develop further using image editing software to enhance colour and light intensity. The new work could be mounted alongside the original for presentation.

Task Three: These are a few of my favourite things... Charcoal Drawing

In the classroom a still life can be set up suitable to be viewed from all directions. If you need more than one class to complete the drawing, it is a good idea to set the still life up on a 1 metre x 1 metre board to be stored until the next class. Students could also work in several smaller groups around different still life arrangements. Encourage the students to work as a group to assemble the still life from found items from the home or school environment or second hand shops. Students explore tonal qualities using willow charcoal and erasing techniques with kneadable erasers. Compressed charcoal can also be used to work up the drawing once the composition has been established.

Task Four: Mixed media

Using the same approach as task three, students can create an initial sketch in pencil or charcoal and then develop the still life representation into a more abstract work using mixed media including water colour pencils, brushes, water colour washes and inks.



Merric Boyd, Jug with trees, 1942



Merric Boyd, Head of Arthur Boyd
aged three months, 1920